

**Bedford Sign Bylaw Committee**  
**July 19, 2012, 7:30 PM**  
**Town Hall, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Conference Room**

**Minutes**

**Attending:** Jeff Cohen, Karen Kenney, Lisa Mustapich, Mark Siegenthaler, Kevin Latady and Ralph Zazula.

**Not in Attendance:** Chris Laskey - Staff

7:39 p.m. meeting called to order by Cohen.

After a discussion, Siegenthaler moved, Mustapich second to accept minutes for June 21. Vote: 5-0-1, Latady not present.

Cohen conveyed to the committee the input from the Historic District Commission (HDC) that he received during the HDC's business session following its July 11, 2012 public meeting. The HDC has jurisdiction over signage in Bedford's Historic Districts, with the exception of illumination. Following are the HDC's primary concerns:

- 30-day temporary signs – how does anyone know when the clock starts? How is the 30-day time limit enforced? Signs typically stay up longer than 30-days. HDC suggested time-stamping temporary signs with a date to reflect the beginning of the 30-day time limit. They would like to see more enforcement of the time limit from the Code Enforcement Department.
- Signs-not-requiring-a-permit are a concern. Many business owners don't understand the rules/limitations. HDC would like to see more enforcement/administrative penalties for signs that don't comply with the Sign Bylaw. The HDC questioned whether or not administrative penalties applied to 30-day temporary signs.
- HDC expressed concerns for window signs (many take up more than 25% of window area); temporary flags and banners (similar concerns as temporary signs). What can be done to beef-up enforcement for con-compliant signs?
- HDC would like to see signs kept in better repair and that businesses be cited if they don't keep their signs in good repair. They questioned what could be done to let Code Enforcement know about signs that were in a state of disrepair. Cohen informed the HDC members that they and any resident can call the Code Enforcement Department to report issues with con-compliant signs.

SBRC members discussed the HDC's concerns. The members believed date-stamping signs would be difficult to enact and enforce. The members discussed the 30-day time limit. A business could remove the sign after 30-days, wait a day and redisplay the sign and be in compliance with the Bylaw. The members believed it would be unenforceable and too time consuming for the Building Inspector to drive around and town and check the date stamps.

SBRC members understood the HDC's concern with window signs. Some businesses around town have excessive signage in their windows - looks cluttered and unattractive. The members discussed how the Bylaw language could be interpreted (window signs can account for 25% of

the window area). The members agreed that the language is broad enough to be interpreted without confusion and did not see an urgency to revise the language at this time.

SBRC members appreciated the HDC's concerns, but did not see an effective way to implement them with this update to the Sign Bylaw. Many of the HDC's concerns are related to enforcement. The members believed the Code Enforcement staff did not have the resources to patrol signage looking for violations. If people have an issue with a sign, they can call the Code Enforcement office.

The members had no comments on the changes to the bylaw made to date.

The members discussed the proposed "Table 40.1 - Schedule of Sign Regulations" and had the following comments:

- Regarding format: Members suggested combining the Limited Business, General Business and Commercial District categories into one "bracket" because the requirements are so similar; and to swap "Maximum Number" column with "Minimum Setback" column.
- Add Sandwich Board signs to Commercial District and all Industrial Districts.
- Add awning signs to Commercial District.
- Add Flags to all districts except Residential Districts.
- Residential Districts: Delete Projecting Sign and Window Sign from Residential Districts bracket; Insert 6 SF as maximum allowable area for wall signs; revise maximum allowable height for signs from 4-feet to 5-feet; Add "SP" in Permit Procedures column for Wall Signs.
- Limited Business District: Maximum Area – inserted max areas for Projecting Sign (10s.f.), Construction Sign, Real Estate Sign, Temp. Non-commercial sign (6 s.f. ea.), Window sign (25%); Maximum height and width for projecting signs required more consideration; Maximum height and width for Construction Sign, Real Estate Sign, Temp. Non-commercial sign to be the same as Residential District; Inserted requirements for projecting signs - minimum setback = 2' inside curb line, maximum number = 1, no illumination allowed, Building Permit required.
- Members agreed upon recommending a revision to the maximum allowable height for a freestanding sign in the Limited Business and General Business Districts from 6-feet to 10-feet. The existing freestanding sign at the Marshalls/Whole Foods shopping center was cited as an example of why a 6-foot-high sign is impractical in this district when the property has multiple businesses on the premises. When the shopping center is renovated, a new sign will be required because the existing sign is slated to be removed. Members recognized the need for a larger sign to identify multiple businesses on the premises on the sign. The committee is also recommending an increase in the area of the freestanding sign in these districts by Special Permit.
- Discussed the need to investigate sandwich board sign criteria before entering requirements into table. Members are considering requiring sandwich board signs to be by Special Permit.

Members discussed the complications surrounding the Town Meeting approval process for the proposed Table 40.1. No amendments are allowed at TM, but the Table will include some requirements that might not be approved by TM. Members decided not to submit the Table with the proposed requirements as a Warrant Article at TM, but to have it be available on the Town website and at the Code Enforcement office as an information resource for people who want to a

quick reference guide to the Sign Bylaw requirements. The Table could be added to the Bylaw at a subsequent Town Meeting once the changes to the Bylaw have been finalized.

Cohen informed the members of the efforts to inform the public about the committee's efforts: 1) Cohen submitted an article to the Bedford Minuteman. Editor Eileen Kennedy said the article would run with the letters to the editor. She also asked if one or more members would be interested in a Q&A with her to discuss why the Sign Bylaw changes are being proposed. Cohen informed her that he would get back to her later in the summer to schedule a sit-down/Q&A; 2) Cohen submitted the article to the Bedford Byline. Rick Reed said it would run in the September or October edition.

Cohen informed members that Rick Reed asked the committee to prepare a progress report to be presented to the Selectmen. Rick Reed asked that the report highlight any controversial proposals that could elicit lively discussions at Fall Town Meeting in November. He also suggested that the committee present a Committee Report at Fall Town Meeting as a way to inform and prepare residents for the proposed changes at Annual Town Meeting in spring 2013.

Members agreed to not meet in August due to vacation conflicts and the difficulty it would pose to impanel a quorum; therefore, the August 16 meeting was cancelled.

9:23 p.m. Mustapich moved to adjourn, Siegenthaler second. Vote: 5-0.

Respectfully submitted by Jeff Cohen.

Upcoming Meetings:

September 11, 2012

September 20, 2012

October 2012 – Group will hold a public workshop to encourage public participation in the re-write.